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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Support)

SUBJECT : CIA's Language Program

1. Several months ago OTR began a comprehensive review of CIA's language program with the aim of determining whether our present efforts in this field are satisfying Agency requirements and, if not, what new courses of action ought to be undertaken. The review is still in progress and our preliminary conclusions are obviously tentative. Nevertheless, they involve several points of sufficient interest to warrant bringing them to your attention even at this stage of the review.

2. Perhaps at the outset, several important external developments should be recorded (Tab A). While none of these affects CIA directly, their indirect, and particularly their cumulative, effect will undoubtedly influence some of our judgments about the language problem.

### 3. CIA's Present Language Development Program

#### a. Background

25X1A [REDACTED] issued 4 February 1957, established CIA's present Language Development Program which consists of:

- (1) Directed Language Training Program
- (2) Voluntary Language Training Program
- (3) Language Awards Program

DTR is responsible for general direction of the Language Development Program and for the training facilities involved. The Deputy Directors are responsible for determining language requirements within their components and for assuring that their personnel meet such requirements. The Director of Personnel, with the collaboration of DTR, maintains a current inventory of the language skills of all staff personnel.

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**SECRET****b. Directed Language Training Program**

The directed program involves internal training facilities operated by OTR and external facilities in the U. S. and abroad operated by other agencies, institutions, or private concerns. Students in the directed program study during official hours on a full-time or part-time basis. OTR can provide internal training in 20 languages and can arrange external training in virtually any language desired. The language staff has been aggressive in keeping abreast of external training opportunities to avoid developing unnecessary duplications in courses and facilities. The inter-agency "roundtable" that CIA organized has been especially helpful for this purpose. Tab B reflects the number of students and the number of languages taught in the directed program during each of the last four years.

**c. Voluntary Language Training Program**

The VLTP includes off-duty language training at overseas stations as well as the very sizable after-hours program conducted by OTR. At present the latter, which utilizes regular CIA employees almost exclusively in its "volunteer instructor corps," can provide instruction in 15 languages. Tab B shows the number of students and languages taught in the VLTP during the past four years. Figures for the current year include 33 new JOT's and their wives who asked to be enrolled in after-hours language courses in addition to their regular JOT instructional program.

**d. Language Awards**

Since the Awards Program was inaugurated in February 1957, there have been 1,027 initial achievement awards and 1,225 annual maintenance awards. The total cost of the program through FY 1959 has been \$234,675 and the FY 1960 cost may approximate \$300,000.

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**SECRET****4. CIA's Language Requirements and Language Skills****a. Requirements**

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Although some components have surveyed their language requirements from time to time, a study of CIA's over-all requirements has never been made. We believe such a study is essential for any real examination of our language problem and for any realistic planning to meet our language needs. To this end, and to assist the Deputy Directors in determining language requirements, OTR suggests an immediate survey of such requirements in each component, working through the members of the Language Development Committee. The survey will be handicapped by the lack of clear-cut policies as to languages and degrees of proficiency required in various jobs. But it will constitute an important beginning and will provide an extremely useful tool for approaching some of the important policy questions with which I am convinced we must shortly come to grips.

**b. Inventory of Skills**

Soon after the Language Development Program was announced in 1957, the Office of Personnel and OTR developed a language questionnaire which was distributed to all employees. The results of this survey were put on machine records which are kept up to date and which constitute the Agency's basic inventory of language skills. In 1957 OTR launched a companion testing program to verify the proficiencies claimed by employees on their language questionnaires. Both the questionnaires and the proficiency tests are features of the Language Awards Program and the testing is entirely voluntary. To date, only about 25% of those employees claiming language proficiencies have been tested. Hence our language inventory, although complete in its coverage of Agency employees, has not been adequately verified. We are taking vigorous action to step up the testing program, with the hope of verifying at least 75% of the claims

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within the next six months. Heretofore, tests have been given only in Washington. We are planning to extend them to major overseas stations and also are increasing their frequency.

A copy of the current inventory is attached (Tab C). It shows the number of employees claiming some proficiency in each language and the number who have been tested. It also shows the number of persons who demonstrated a useful level of proficiency (intermediate or higher) on testing.

## 5. Comments and Observations

### a. General

Even in the absence of a statement of CIA's overall language requirements, and taking our inventory of claimed skills at face value, it is clear that some very

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It is also increasingly clear that our voluntary language training program, despite the energy that goes into it and the fairly large number of students participating, will not solve many of CIA's language problems. The overwhelming number of students in the program are enrolled at the beginning and elementary levels and the great preponderance (about 75%) are studying only the four world languages--French, German, Spanish, and Russian.

### b. Directed Language Training Program

It is apparent to me that our directed training program is the one on which we must rely for any significant number of persons with useful levels of language proficiency.

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And it is our only means of training students in many of the esoteric languages. Yet during FY 1959 only 130 persons enrolled in full-time language courses (with another 480 receiving part-time directed training). During the same period, the State Department enrolled 430 of its 3,500 FSO's in twelve or more weeks of full-time language training! I believe CIA must very shortly face up to some fundamental policy decisions (see paragraph 5., e. below) with respect to directed language training.

**c. Voluntary Language Training Program**

An impressive number of students have been attending off-duty language courses in Washington and at many overseas stations. However, a close analysis of the languages they are studying and the degrees of proficiency they are attaining makes it clear that this can never be more than an auxiliary program. Its value lies in:

- (1) promoting increased interest in language training generally;
- (2) identifying talented individuals who should receive directed training;
- (3) building a foundation which permits accelerated training for students who go on to directed courses;
- (4) enabling a small group of individuals who already possess some proficiency to maintain and increase their proficiency.

I believe some adjustments must be made in the VLTP, particularly: (1) the tightening up of admission requirements to eliminate curiosity seekers and misfits; (2) a shift of emphasis away from the beginning levels of the common European languages so that increased emphasis can be placed on the languages in short supply and on the intermediate levels of all languages. Some adjustments along these lines have already been made. When our review of the whole language program is complete, the need for others may also emerge.

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**SECRET****d. Awards**

Our present awards program was designed to stimulate interest in language training generally and to reward "effort to achieve and maintain language proficiency." It has been a useful and worthwhile venture. However, I think the time is at hand to shift the emphasis from effort to utility. Specifically, I think awards for elementary levels of skill, certainly in Class I languages (the easy ones), should be eliminated. And our scale of awards should be reckoned, not by how hard a language is to learn, but rather by how much CIA needs that language and will benefit from the recipient's possession of it. These observations need to be supported by further study before firm recommendations can be made.

**e. Long-Range Goals**

When our review of the language program is completed, I think it will point up convincingly the need for specific, clear-cut statements of Agency policies and long-term goals in the language field. Our present policy statements are too general and have no teeth in them. Again I want the benefit of more information and more intensive study before recommending the policies and goals we ought to adopt. But I have these in mind:

(1) A policy that will identify the categories of CIA employees for whom specified degrees of language proficiency are required, and a companion policy tying these standards of proficiency into promotion practices.

(2) A policy that will require the identification of positions, or proportions of positions, in each overseas station which can be filled only by individuals possessing a language commonly used at that station.

(3) Mandatory language proficiency testing for all employees required by the foregoing policies to have a language skill. Proficiency (or aptitude) testing should also be a routine part of the EOD

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process for all new professional employees and for any other new employee who claims a language skill.

(4) Clearer recognition of the requirement for developing increasing numbers of area specialists who are linguistically qualified, and companion policies to prevent discrimination against such specialists in competitive promotions and assignments. *yes*

(5) A better appreciation of the need for long-range planning in connection with language development. In DD/P the annual programming process might well incorporate language requirements. *yes*

6. I would welcome any thoughts you may have on any aspects of this problem and as our review of the language program progresses I will keep you informed of any significant developments.

SIGNED

MATTHEW BAIRD  
Director of Training

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